

This Representation was handed to the Committee of Bids and Overtures to be transmitted by them to the Supreme Court. But the Court was unexpectedly dissolved in consequence of the sickness of the King's Commissioner, and the Representation was referred to the Assembly's Commission, with powers to express their approval of the method proposed by the Commission in putting such queries, yet they agreed to answer them under protest. The answers were prepared by Mr. Ebenezer Erskine, and Mr. Gabriel Wilson; and although they are elaborate, yet they discover a profound knowledge of divine truth. The matter was terminated in the Assembly in a manner very unsatisfactory, by their passing an Act explaining and modifying their former query retaining it more obnoxious to the Church, from teaching either publicly or privately, by writing, print, preaching, catechizing, or in any other way the positions condemned, and they charged "the several Presbyteries and Synods and the Commission, to take particular care that this objection be punctually observed by all ministers and members of the Church, and more especially the Presbyteries and Synods within whose bounds any of the last-mentioned signed Representation might reside. They further ordained that these brethren be rebuked and admonished by the Moderator, on account of injurious reflections contained in their Representation, and at the same time it was declared that their conduct deserved a higher censure, but that the Assembly forbore to inflict it in the hope that lenity exercised toward them, would excite them to more dutiful behaviour in time to come." (Dr. McKerron's History of the Secession Church.)

The censure was administered, but immediately afterwards, a Protest, which had been prepared, was presented by Mr. Kidd, in the name of himself and his brethren, which, however, the Assembly refused to read, or to allow to be on their table. This Protest was strong and faithful. They declare that "it shall be lawful for them, age to age to the Word of God and the standards of doctrine of this Church, to profess, preach, and still bear testimony unto the truths condemned, or otherwise injured, by the Acts of the Assembly, notwithstanding the said Acts or whatever should follow thereupon."

"Many," says Dr. Henry Thomson, in his recent sketch of the origin of the Secession "perceived that this Protest containing, as it did, so unequivocal a refusal of the Assembly's authority, would have led to more severe and summary measures. But a hint in the royal letter, representing the unfitness of divisions for the present fearful conjuncture, induced the dominant party in the Assembly to wink at a contempt of their authority which, in other circumstances, they would doubtless have visited with their highest censure. The last-mentioned party, however, made a compact with Ebenezer Erskine and Boston of Lutwick at their head, and the Secession, which at length took place, has been antedated several years. It was well that it was prevented, and that the Secession when it did at length occur, should have been grounded on a yet wider basis, and carried along with it yet more decidedly the convictions and sympathies of the people.

This Marrow controversy produced effects which did not terminate with the controversy itself, and which have been followed by more important results. Perhaps the chief of these were, that it led the serious among the ministers to turn their thoughts more directly to the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, and that it drew a wider line of separation between the evangelical ministers and those who were led away by the current of corruption which was now rolled on with augmenting force. This last class seemed to despise every thing which savoured of the gospel of free grace, and they were more ready to give their sanction to iniquity, morality and philosophy; but destitute of all reference to salvation through the blood of Christ. They often harangued against what they considered the austere and gloomy sentiments which were taught by the evangelical party, and although they subscribed to the Standards of the Church, yet they rejected and despised the doctrines which these Standards inculcated.

This state of things seems to have emboldened Professor Simson to disregard the injunctions of the Assembly in 1717, and not only to persist in teaching his students the errors for which he had been rebuked, but to venture the propagation of errors of a grosser kind. He now taught, among other things, "that the Son of God is not necessarily existent, that the three persons of the Godhead are not the same in substance, and that necessary existence, supreme Deity, and being the only true God, may be taken in a sense importing the personal property of the Father, and so not being to the Son."

The matter was prepared for the General Assembly. The majority of the Presbyteries were of opinion that the Professor should be deposed from the office of his ministry. Their views were, however, not regarded. He was merely suspended from his ecclesiastical functions, whilst he was left to enjoy all the privileges of Church communion, and the emoluments of office. "This," it was well remarked, "was all the censure that the Assembly saw it necessary to inflict on one who had disobeyed their former injunctions, and now drew the Lord that bought him."

Such was the state of religion in the ministry of the Church of Scotland, at this period, and it may reasonably be inferred that among the laity in general, who were under the care of such ministers, there could be but little or no good. The people of such parishes, who were the fathers of our Church, "were at this time very low. Our nobility and gentry, for the most part, had not even the form of godliness. Many of them had drunk in doctinal principles. Through their frequent visits to London, and their conforming themselves there to the worship and ceremonies of the Church of England, they were altogether careless and indifferent about the worship and government of the Lord's House in Scotland. The most of our Bishops were corrupt and base, both in principle and practice, and our Convocations were generally without that concern about the things of God, which has sometimes appeared amongst us.— Few of our young men who are entering the ministry, have acquaintance with systematic Divinity, yet they despise it, and what is worse, are puffed up they appear to be strangers to the power of godliness. They are muffled up with many speculations, and their heads are filled with new notions. Thus is the deplorable situation of the Church of Scotland at this time."

It may seem surprising, from such dismal statements as these, that in a Church where the doctrines of grace were, in so many instances, treated with scorn and ridicule, the faithful few could remain without feeling it imperative to separate themselves spontaneously by withdrawing ecclesiastically as well as socially, from the corrupt mass with which they were connected. But it may be remarked that they cherished anxious hopes that Providence would be pleased to send forth a new and more powerful agent, by a greater out-pouring of his Holy Spirit there might be a revival of religion and a restoration of their Church to consistency and purity. At that period also, notwithstanding the evils increasing in number and magnitude, which the evangelized party now witnessed and deplored, nothing but a violent excision, to which a wise Providence at length condescended, was likely to lead to the organization of a separate Church, on a Scriptural basis. For the idea of schism was at that time so closely associated with dissent, even from a corrupt Church, that scarcely any consideration could induce the serious party to make a voluntary secession from their backsliding brethren. But at a high these mournful defections, which, with the light of our age, would have led at once to separation, did not then, in themselves, lead to it, yet their existence, to such a lamentable extent, must certainly be regarded as an ample justification of the Secession when it did take place, and in that state of things, so very necessary to the future success of the cause, the least intimation added to vindicate the course to which a gracious Providence opened the way.

This prevalence of error, to which we have been turning our attention, was the principal cause leading to the origin of the United Presbyterian Church, and this cause was strengthened and the progress of its operation accelerated by the vote, we mean the law of Patronage, to which we formerly referred. For it is evident, that the exercise of this law was the means of rapidly planting a great proportion of the Churches with ministers of worldly and carnal views, who were more anxious to follow the fashion of the world, and to court the favour of those in power, and enrich themselves, than to feed the flock and advance the cause of the great Redeemer. Thus, in proportion as the law of Patronage was exercised, and hereby the ground for Secession enlarged, the Church became more and more doctrinally corrupt, and the standard of everlasting truth was weakened and ready to be overturned. Hereby the causes for Secession fermented by reciprocal action, till they were prepared to burst forth in that great result to which Providence was leading the way.

In our next communication we shall advance to the very process in which the United Presbyterian Church originated.

(To be continued.)

ERRATUM—page 73, line 23 of second column, for "translations," read "transactions."

[FOR THE CANADIAN PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE.]

CHARGES BROUGHT BY THE HEATHEN AGAINST THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANS.

During the first ages, Christianity was not only misrepresented and misused, but its features were caricatured and its motives were misconstrued. The heathen saw nothing in their religion beyond an "execrable superstition"; and they mistook the firmness of principle for the obstinacy of pride. The charges, or rather calumnies, which they preferred against believers, related either to their outward condition, or to their moral practice.

1. Such charges, as related to the outward condition of the early Christians; Paul, in describing the external condition of the first Christians in Corinth—a city distinguished for its riches and refinement—said, "not many were men after the flesh, not many noble, not many beautiful, as ye call"; and this circumstance was, in subsequent times, converted into a reproach. Minutius Felix, who wrote a dialogue between a heathen and a Christian, represents the heathen as describing Christians "to be men of an unlabial and desperate faction, who, gathering a company out of the very dregs and refuse of the people, of silly, easy, credulous women, who, by reason of the weakness of their sex, are easily imposed